

THE PUN IS IN FASHION . . . AND THE FUN IS IN PASSION

A Chrestomathy of New Spoonerisms

DON HAUPTMAN
New York, New York
donhauptman@nyc.rr.com

A news story on October 21, 2011 reported that Spain's separatist ETA group had pledged to end its four decades of violent protests. Thus, one of the all-time classic spoonerisms had become reality: All the Basques were put in one exit!

This provoked a profound question: Could spoonerisms explain all important events?

As I write, Washington regulators and bureaucrats are debating whether to approve a Chinese company's controversial purchase of the Virginia-based producer of the fabled Smithfield hams. If the merger goes through, overseas executives will be popping the cork . . . and copping the pork.

Every day, *The Wall Street Journal* runs a quirky front-page feature. Typical is the one on November 5, 2012: "Few [Yukon tales] are stranger than the saga of the Sourtoe Cocktail. Garnished with a preserved human toe, this digital drink is administered nightly to crowds of tourists, trappers and miners." As I read the item, it struck me that Canadian bartenders must routinely exclaim "I sold you toe!"

Another news report noted that Afghan tribes weave traditional woolen carpets, festooned with images of weapons and such, to commemorate military victories. Thus we see the origin of the famous song lyric "Leave your dhurries on the warstep."

As always, while preparing this article, I Googled everything to confirm originality. Most of the time, "no results" appeared. In a few cases, a handful of clever punsters had anticipated me but couldn't come up with the perfect setup or context.

I was astonished, however, to find thousands of matches for *beef jerky/beefy jerk*—including guest appearances on coffee mugs and BBQ aprons. Also many citations of *fully booked/bully fooked!*, some of which utterances were reported to have been unintentional. I was beaten to the punch on *The Sages of Wynn* and *To Patch a Creditor*.

Ruefully, I deleted the foregoing specimens from the roster of truly original (one hopes!) new spoonerisms below.

- Anti-American propagandists: *They rail at the West . . . and wail at the rest.*
- Warning notice on deadbeat's doorbell: *Nobody buzz it! —debtor.*

- Vintners who specialize in fruit-flavored dessert wines: *They know where the berries are bodied.*
- Recession eliminates popular hiring incentives: *No perk, no way!*
- Reality show follows production of over-the-top infomercials: *Pitch Man, Roar Man.*
- Mr. Vincent, former baseball commissioner, confesses all in new memoir: *Cleat of Fay.*
- Documentary on end of calypso fad: *The Last Discs of "Day-O!"*
- Sequel to "Parliament of Fowls," classic 14th-century poem: *The Terns Have Tabled.*
- Imperious Indian chefs intimidate assistants who fail to master challenging bread-baking skills, as portrayed in new film: *The Glower and the Poori.*
- Chain of macho fitness centers: *Body Lard of Guys.*
- Appalling rudeness of children today inspires competition to find best-behaved youngster in the nation: *America's Tot, Gallant.*

Lastly, a few quasi-absurd shaggy-dog stories, the beloved form that traditionally concludes with a spoonerized punch line.

Two grizzled prospectors, lost in the desert, had exhausted their food supply. In desperation, one shot a distant rodent, provoking the ire of his pal, who cautioned that this foolish action would likely attract vultures and other dangerous birds of prey. Clearly, the savvier partner knew the familiar maxim: *If you killed it, they will bum.*

Pilots of Soviet-era MiG planes were affectionately known as Miggies. One day, a flier returned to base but failed to report instantly to headquarters. When the commanding officer inquired as to his whereabouts, the co-pilot supplied the answer: *This little Miggie went to park it.*

Capitalizing on growing interest in circus performing, a small publisher commissioned a book explaining how to polish one's skills by imitating the great masters of the art. The book was packaged in a handsome metal box, which also included essential props such as rubber noses and juggling balls. Title: *The "Mime Every Clown" Tin.*

Well, that says it all . . . and that's not all it says!